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BARBIE CASE

BROKAW: And there is more information tonight on the activities of Klaus Barbie, the Nazi who was known as The Butcher of Leone for his atrocities in France during World War II. Following the war, Barbie worked for U.S. intelligence agents in Europe, and they helped get him a new identity and a new life in Bolivia. James Polk describes the operation. POLK: This is the man who smuggled accused Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie out of Europe. Former American intelligence agent George Neagoy, now retired and owner of a basement coffee shop in a CIA building in Arlington, Va. When France wanted the U.S. Army to return Barbie to stand trial in 1951, Neagoy was called in to use his underground route called the Rat Line, which he had set up for Soviet defectors. Neagoy said Army Intelligence told him... NEAGOY: ...This man has got to leave Germany, so would you, and could you, get him out of here? I said, 'There's no problem. We'll be glad to get him out for you.' I asked no questions because, again, remember, this was okayed by my headquarters and okayed by the headquarters in Germany.

POLK: Neagoy, then a civilian agent with the counter-intelligence corps, said he was not told who the man, his wife and two children were. NEAGOY: They were like scared dogs for that matter. He was pretty fearful, frightened. Didn't know what was really going to happen to him. He was set up. He felt that he didn't know where he was gonna go, what he was gonna do. We told him it was gonna be South America. Somewhere.

POLK: He said he trained false identity papers for Barbie as a displaced person under the name of Klaus Altman. NEAGOY: That's what he traveled under, under the name of Altman. During that period of time the displaced persons had certain documents, it was a covered document. I believe we called him Mr. X. That's the way we used to put people through.

POLK: The escape route was simple. By automobile from Augsburg, Germany to Salzburg, Austria. A short wait in a hotel for the false papers. Then by train to Genoa, Italy where Barbie would board a ship for Bolivia. NEAGOY: It was Altman that I took across, and obviously now Klaus Barbie.

POLK: It would be 32 more years before Barbie would be returned to France to face trial. James Polk, NBC News, Washington.

BROKAW: You could say that George Neagoy was a source close to NBC News. He also runs the cafeteria at the NBC News office in Washington. When his name came up in the Barbie story, he was asked why he had never volunteered anything. Neagoy answered, 'Nobody asked.'

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